AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please replace the claims with the claims provided in the listing below wherein status, amendments, additions and cancellations are indicated.

1. (Currently Amended) A game progress administering system in which game terminal units to be operated by players are operated while being so connected via communication lines as to be able to communicate operation signals necessary for [[the]] progress of a <u>competition</u> game ~~, thereby administering the progresses~~ <u>and administration of progression</u> of competition games in a tournament made up of a plurality of rounds, comprising:

participation receiving means for receiving [[the]] participation in the competition game from the game terminal units,

combination generating means for fitting participating terminal units <u>of the game terminal units</u>, which are game terminal units whose participation was received by the participation receiving means, [[in]] <u>into</u> combinations of <u>the participating game terminal units for</u> the competition game tournament in accordance with a specified rule,

competition starting means for allotting one game space to one combination in accordance with the combinations generated by the combination generating

means and instructing the participating terminal units to start the competition games in the respective rounds, [[and]]

competition ending means for instructing the participating terminal units to end competitions in the respective rounds in accordance with time limits for competition times set beforehand for the respective rounds at least up to the semifinal round and determining winning participating terminal units in accordance with [[the]] dominance in ~~the progress statuses~~ progression of the competition games when the competitions [[were]] are ended,

the competition game being a game simulating mahjong having a plurality of winds,

proceeding means for proceeding with the competition game in accordance with a tile discarding time that is a preset limit time from draw of a tile to discard of a tile,

rank storage means for storing ranks of the players representing strengths of the players based on past competition results in correspondence with identification information of the players, and

discarding-time storage means for storing a tile discarding time for each rank,

wherein the participation receiving means receives the identification information of the players and reads the ranks corresponding to the received identification information of the players from the rank storage means, and the proceeding means reads the tile discarding time corresponding to the rank read by the participation receiving means from the discarding-time storage means, and conducts the competition game in accordance with the read tile discarding time.

2. (Original) A game progress administering system according to claim 1, further comprising participating terminal number counting means for counting a participating terminal number, which is the number of the participating terminal units, by counting up the participating terminal number every time the participation in the competition game is received by the participation receiving means and by resetting the participating terminal number to 0 if the participating terminal number has coincided with a maximum participating terminal number, which is the total number of the game terminal units constituting the competition game tournament or if a predetermined time has lapsed after a timing at which the participating terminal number was changed from 0 to 1, wherein:

the competition starting means instructs the participating terminal units to start the competition games at a timing when the participating terminal number is reset by the participating terminal number counting means, and

the combination generating means fits the participating terminal units in the combinations of the competition game tournament again after a timing at which the participating terminal number is reset by the participating terminal number counting means.

3. (Original) A game progress administering system according to claim 2, further comprising combination interval setting means for setting the predetermined time in accordance with date and hour.

4. (Currently Amended) A game progress administering system according to claim 2, wherein the combination generating means allots [[the]] game terminal units to be virtually operated by CPU players as lacking game terminal units if the participating terminal number falls short of the maximum participating terminal number upon the lapse of the predetermined time.

5. (Currently Amended) A game progress administering system according to claim 1, wherein the combination generating means fits the participating terminal units [[in]] into the combinations of the competition game tournament so that the numbers of the participating terminal units fitted in the respective combinations of the competition game tournament substantially coincide with each other.

6. (Previously Presented) A game progress administering system according to claim 1, wherein the competition ending means instructs the participating terminal units to end the competition at a point of time when the progress status of the competition game becomes a predetermined status when no time limit is set for the final round.

7. (Currently Amended) A game progress administering system according to claim 1, wherein:

the competition game is ~~the one~~ played by three or a larger specified ~~larger~~ number of competitors,

the game progress administering system further comprises winner number setting means for setting [[the]] a number of winners in one combination made up of the specified number of competitors for each round, and

the competition ending means determines the number of winners set by the winner number setting means.

8. (Canceled)

9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) A game progress administering system according to claim [[9]] 1, wherein the higher the rank, the shorter the tile discarding time to be set in the discarding-time storage means.

11. (Currently Amended) A game progress administering system according to claim [[9]] 1, wherein the proceeding means receives operation information to [[the]] effect [[of]] extending the tile discarding time from one participating terminal unit only a specified number of times for each round, and extends the tile discarding time only by a specified time if receiving the operation information to [[the]] effect [[of]] extending the tile discarding time from the participating terminal unit.

12. (Currently Amended) A game progress administering method using a game progress administering system in which game terminal units to be operated by players are operated while being so connected via communication lines as to be able to communicate operation signals necessary for the progress of a game, thereby administering the progresses of competition games in a tournament made up of a plurality of rounds, ~~the game progress administering method causing~~ the game progress administering method ~~to perform~~ comprising:

a participation receiving process for receiving [[the]] participation in the competition game from the game terminal units,

a combination generating process for fitting participating terminal units of the game terminal units, which are game terminal units whose participation was received by the participation receiving process, [[in]] into combinations of the participating game terminal units for the competition game tournament in accordance with a specified rule,

a competition starting process for allotting one game space to one combination in accordance with the combinations generated by the combination generating means and instructing the participating terminal units to start the competition games in the respective rounds, [[and]]

a competition ending process for instructing the participating terminal units to end competitions in the respective rounds in accordance with time limits for competition times set beforehand for the respective rounds at least up to the semifinal round and determining winning participating terminal units in accordance with [[the]] dominance in the progress statuses progression of the competition games when the competitions [[were]] are ended,

the competition game being a game simulating mahjong having a plurality of winds,

a proceeding process for proceeding with the competition game in accordance with a tile discarding time that is a preset limit time from draw of a tile to discard of a tile,

a rank storage process for storing ranks of the players representing strengths of the players based on past competition results in correspondence with identification information of the players, and

a discarding-time storage process for storing a tile discarding time for each rank,

wherein the participation receiving process receives the identification information of the players and reads the ranks corresponding to the received identification information of the players from the rank storage process, and the proceeding process reads the tile discarding time corresponding to the rank read by the participation receiving process from the discarding-time storage process, and conducts the competition game in accordance with the read tile discarding time.

13. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable recording medium storing a game progress administering program for a game progress administering system in which game terminal units to be operated by players are operated while being so connected via communication lines as to be able to communicate operation

signals necessary for [[the]] progress of a <u>competition</u> game —, thereby administering the progresses and <u>administration of progression</u> of competition games in a tournament made up of a plurality of rounds, the game progress administering program causing the game progress administering system to function as:

participation receiving means for receiving [[the]] participation in the competition game from the game terminal units,

combination generating means for fitting participating terminal units <u>of the game terminal units</u>, which are game terminal units whose participation was received by the participation receiving means, [[in]] <u>into</u> combinations of <u>the participating game terminal units for</u> the competition game tournament in accordance with a specified rule,

competition starting means for allotting one game space to one combination in accordance with the combinations generated by the combination generating means and instructing the participating terminal units to start the competition games in the respective rounds, [[and]]

competition ending means for instructing the participating terminal units to end competitions in the respective rounds in accordance with time limits for competition times set beforehand for the respective rounds at least up to the

semifinal round and determining winning participating terminal units in accordance

with [[the]] dominance in ~~the progress statuses~~ progression of the competition

games when the competitions [[were]] are ended,

the competition game being a game simulating mahjong having a plurality

of winds,

proceeding means for proceeding with the competition game in accordance

with a tile discarding time that is a preset limit time from draw of a tile to discard

of a tile,

rank storage means for storing ranks of the players representing strengths

of the players based on past competition results in correspondence with

identification information of the players, and

discarding-time storage means for storing a tile discarding time for each

rank,

wherein the participation receiving means receives the identification

information of the players and reads the ranks corresponding to the received

identification information of the players from the rank storage means, and the

proceeding means reads the tile discarding time corresponding to the rank read by

the participation receiving means from the discarding-time storage means, and

conducts the competition game in accordance with the read tile discarding time.

14. (New) The computer-readable recording medium according to claim 13, wherein:

said proceeding means reads from the discarding time storage means tile discarding times corresponding to a rank of each of the players operating the game terminal units from which the participating receiving means receives participation; and

said proceeding means conducts the competition game in accordance with the tile discarding time read for each of the players such that each of said players is allotted a read tile discarding time corresponding to the rank of the player, wherein the tile discarding times corresponding to higher ones of the ranks are shorter than the tile discarding times corresponding to lower ones of the ranks.

15. (New) The game progress administering method according to claim 12 wherein:

said proceeding process reads from the discarding time storage process tile discarding times corresponding to a rank of each of the players operating the game terminal units from which the participating receiving process receives participation; and

said proceeding process conducts the competition game in accordance with the tile discarding time read for each of the players such that each of said players

is allotted a read tile discarding time corresponding to the rank of the player, wherein the tile discarding times corresponding to higher ones of the ranks are shorter than the tile discarding times corresponding to lower ones of the ranks.

16. (New) The game progress administering system according to claim 1, wherein:

said proceeding means reads from the discarding time storage means tile discarding times each corresponding to a rank of each of the players operating the game terminal units from which the participating receiving means receives participation; and

said proceeding means conducts the competition game in accordance with the tile discarding time read for each of the players such that each of said players is allotted a read tile discarding time corresponding to the rank of the player, wherein the tile discarding times corresponding to higher ones of the ranks are shorter than the tile discarding times corresponding to lower ones of the ranks.